On the Stative Predicate:
Tagalog “Existentials” Revisited

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1. Introduction

In Tagalog, a sentence with a predicate adjective would be like the following:

(1) **Ma**ganda si Maria.
    STATIVE-beauty NOM Maria
    ‘Maria is beautiful.’

To express possession, we use a construction such as:

(2) **May** pera ang bata.
    EXISTENTIAL money NOM child
    ‘The child has money.’

To express existence in a location, we use the following construction:

(3) **May** tao sa bahay.
    EXISTENTIAL person LOC house
    ‘There is someone in the house.’

Put together like this, the structural parallelism of the three constructions is quite apparent.

(4) Stative/Existential Marker + Existent + Location
    ma-
    may
    may
    ganda si Maria
    pera ang bata
    tao sa bahay

The implicative relation between EXISTENCE, BEING, AND STATE SHOULD BE OBVIOUS. The fact that *ma-* is a prefix and *may* is an independent word (particle) does not negate their common syntactic-semantic function.

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1 In 1977, Lawrence Reid organized an Austronesian Symposium to which he had invited me to be a part of. It was held at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, in conjunction with the Linguistic Society of America Summer Linguistics Institute. This article grew out of that presentation.

2 The form *si* is the nominative marker for personal proper names.

3 This was recently argued in an email discussion of ‘being’ and ‘existence’ in austronesian@yahoogroups.com led by Judd Evans in 2001.
However, in the grammars known to me, these constructions are not thus juxtaposed. Rather, they have been analyzed and described as separate and different predication types. The first is considered a NONVERBAL clause with a PREDICATE ADJECTIVE. The second, known as “the possessive”, has been considered a VERBAL clause with an UNINFLECTABLE verb, presumably due to its translation as ‘the child HAS money.’ The third, known as “the existential”, has been classified as a “SUBJECTLESS construction” with may supposedly functioning also as an UNINFLECTABLE VERB meaning ‘there is’.4

There has generally been consensus as to what ma- words do: they form “adjectives” and “adverbs” as well as “stative verbs”,5 although just what ma-words really ARE has not been sufficiently nor cogently addressed. With may constructions the analyses have neither been unanimous nor clear. For example, Bloomfield (1933) referred to may as an “exocentric attributive” particle; Lopez (1941) referred to may and its negative counterpart wala as “real particles”, and Santos (1940) likens may to ay which he considers a RELATOR, verb-like but uninflectable. Ramos and De Guzman (1971) consider may an “existential particle”.

Schachter (1977:289, footnote) reveals his point of view on the matter as follows:

According to Clark’s Table 3 (p.12),6 twenty-four of thirty-one languages use different structures for locatives and existentials. Moreover, one of the seven languages Clark lists as using the SAME structure for locatives and existentials is Tagalog, and this is, as we shall see, incorrect.

I beg to differ, however, from Schachter’s analysis, as well as similar others, of these Tagalog constructions. Most previous analyses have extrapolated from English grammar. Hence:

1. The verb ‘to be’ had been brought into the Tagalog where it does not exist.
2. Due to its VERBAL MEANING, ma- + process word has been viewed as syntactically different from ma- + material object/reified concept; the former is viewed as a verbal predicate and the latter as a nonverbal predicate adjective/adverb.
3. The ang-NP had been equated with subject, leading to the perception of the existential as a “SUBJECTLESS” construction; and this being the case, it is viewed as syntactically different from the possessive and the “stative verb”, both of which have the “topic/subject ang-NP”.
4. may is treated as a verb meaning ‘to have’ or ‘there is’, thus resulting in may predications appearing to be syntactically verbal.

TRANSLATION into their English equivalents in which the English verbs ‘to be’ and ‘to have’ are used and the consequent syntactic analyses, based on what the constituents of the English constructions are, have been misleading. Furthermore, the failure to take

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4 Carl Rubino (pers. comm.) considers may a proclitic since it comes before the existent; he also informs me that Nikolaus Himmelmann defines may as an “existential modifier”. Obviously “proclitic” refers to morphological form, while “existential modifier” refers to syntactic-semantic function.

5 Due to limitations of space, certain “stative verbs” such as the so-called “abilitative verb” with ma- (+ ka-) will be discussed only enough to demonstrate that they show identical semantic properties and syntactic structure as the other existential constructs.

6 Clark (1970) did a study of existential constructions in 31 languages.
certain details of Tagalog MORPHOLOGY into account, ON ITS OWN TERMS, appear to have obscured the STRUC TURAL ‘SAMENESS’ of all the three Tagalog existential constructions given above. Thus, if we set these within the framework of their basic UNDERLYING semantics as REALIZED in basic Tagalog PREDICATION SYNTAX, it will become clear that they belong to the SAME PARADIGM.

This paper aims to point out certain syntactic and semantic characteristics of the predicate phrase with ma-words and may-phrases and the sort of sentence constructions that they enter into. However, due to space limitations and other constraints, the semantics/pragmatics will only be indicated rather than addressed in detail. It will also be made clear through the illustrative examples of stative predications that ma-words and may-phrases are NOT SYNTACTICALLY VERBAL predicates. Even when the referent of the root word that is prefixed by ma- happens to be a PROCESS, i.e., VERBAL IN MEANING, the resulting predicate is NOT SYNTACTICALLY VERBAL. However, since the notion of PROCESS implies tense and aspect, ma- stative predicates may also inflect for aspect (ma- > na-) or in the case of may stative predicates (i.e., “existential” constructions ‘there is/are’, marked by suppletion).7 These and other observations lead to the perception of the possessive, existential, qualitative-modifier, and the so-called “stative verb” and “abilitative verb” constructions in Tagalog as having the SAME BASIC SYNTACTIC STRUCTURE and belonging to the SAME SYNTACTICO-SEMANTIC COMPLEX.

2. Tagalog Predication Syntax

The attempt to discuss and argue that the syntactic structure of the stative predicate in isolation is fraught with difficulty, and difficult questions will surely arise. In order to provide some semblance of a syntactic-contextual framework that should illuminate the description of the syntactic structure of the stative predicate, a very brief sketch of Tagalog basic predication syntax is offered at this point.

Without going into detail, I would like to indicate, as other Philippine and Western Austronesian scholars and I have observed or argued elsewhere,8 that TAGALOG BASIC PREDICATION IS SYNTACTICALLY NOMINAL. This is to say that even SEMANTICALLY VERBAL PREDICATIONS are SYNTACTICALLY NOMINAL. In view of this, Tagalog basic predication syntax appears to be ATTRIBUTIVE rather than predicative in character.9 The following sentences clearly illustrate such a characterization of the syntax of the BASIC SENTENCE TYPES of Tagalog:

(5) Titser ang babae.
    teacher NOM woman
    ‘The woman (is a) teacher.’

(6) Maganda ang babae.
    beautiful NOM woman
    ‘The woman (is) beautiful.’

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7 This will be discussed and illustrated below.
8 In Naylor (1999, 2001, 2002); Shkarban (1995); Alieva (1978, 1980); Lopez (1928, 1941)
9 Naylor (1976, 1979) discusses the concept of SYNTACTIC ATTRIBUTE/ATTRIBUTION and Naylor (1999, 2001) deals with “Nominal Syntax in Verbal Predications”. Syntactic attribution is comparable to Martinet’s theory of predicate modification referred to as “PREMIER MODIFIANT, etc.” (C. Tchekoff, pers. comm.). Laurie Reid (pers. comm.) states that the syntactic attribute constituent COMES AFTER THE ATTRIBUTE [as the PREMIER MODIFIANT does].
(7) Umalis ang babae.  
left NOM woman  
‘The woman left.’

Note that PREDICATE NOUN, PREDICATE ADJECTIVE, and SEMANTICALLY VERBAL predicate are not SYNTAGMATICALLY differentiated; i.e., regardless of the referential meaning of the predicate word, be it NOMINA REI or NOMINA ACTIONIS.

Tagalog basic sentence structure has been described as BIPARTITE, consisting of a “comment” and a “topic” constituent (Ramos and De Guzman 1971) or like an EQUATION (Schachter and Otanes 1972). Naylor (1973, 1975) subscribes to the same bipartite equational structure which fits in with the description of basic Tagalog predication syntax as attributive.

In view of this, Tagalog does not need to use a copula or “copulative verb” whenever the sentence has a predicate noun or a predicate adjective, as the way it does in English and other European languages. Predication by attribution is realized by simple juxtaposition — PARATAXIS.\(^{10}\)

As is widely known, Tagalog is a PREDICATE-FIRST language or in Greenbergian terminology, a V-first language. Thus, sentences (5)–(7), with the predicate in the initial position, are examples of the UNMARKED order of clause/sentence constituents.

However, when the marked order is used, with the constituents in the reverse order, the particle ay — a discourse/relation marker in Tagalog,\(^{11}\) is inserted.\(^{12}\) In colloquial speech, instead of ay, a pause is usually used.\(^{13}\)

Thus, one can see examples, such as Ang babae ay titser or Ang babae/titser. It is very obvious that due to its occurrence between the topic and the predicate, ay has been thought to be a copula like the English copula ‘is’.

\(^{10}\) There has been lively discussion on the role of the VERB ‘to be’ in English, Spanish, and French, and the existential constructions of Tagalog and Anutan (e.g., Evans, Feinberg, and Potet, email 2001). Is it the quintessential vehicle for the expression of existence and is it in fact a verb at all? It was brought out that Tagalog, which has no copula or copulative verb at all, demonstrates that the existential can be expressed without it.

\(^{11}\) The order of “topic/(subject) + predicate” was deemed to be the unmarked order with ay as the copulative verb, presumably originally modeled after Spanish sentence syntax and later after English sentence syntax. To this day, many Tagalog speakers continue to believe that “Tagalog is just like English”. Filipinos were taught in school that, as conventional wisdom had it, ay is a copulative verb — just as in Spanish and English. Yet in his Balartla ‘Grammar’, written in Tagalog, Santos (1940) had pointed out that ay was NOT, strictly speaking, a real verb, but a RELATION MARKER (which included the copulative function). A. Buenaventura (1967) argued that it was NOT a copula; it was an INVERSION MARKER. This analysis has been widely held since among linguists. Potet (pers. comm.) calls it an ANTEPOSER. However, I have argued in print and in unpublished presentations that ay is NOT an inversion marker or an anteposer either; it is a RELATION MARKER, a DISCOURSE NEXUS MARKER.

\(^{12}\) This is demonstrated by the common occurrence of ay in non-inverted order sentences; e.g., Mabuti pa’y umalis tayo nang maaga bukas ‘Better yet that we leave early tomorrow’ to which the interlocutor might reply Ay sinabi mo ‘You said it’. As I recalled that speakers of Cavite Tagalog can respond to the previous discourse with something like Ay bakit naman nagkaganoon ‘(well) why did it end up like that?’ or Ay kung gay’on, huwag na lang! ‘(well) if that is so, better not’. One is even led to wonder if the ubiquitous discourse marker E developed phonetically, \([AI \rightarrow E]\), from ay. (To my knowledge, hardly any analysis of the discourse markers E, A, and O has been done to date.)

\(^{13}\) Certain dialects of Tagalog, e.g., the Cavite and Bulacan dialects of Tagalog use the ay construction with greater frequency. Idiolectal variation within dialects can also be observed.
3. The Stative Predicate: Ma- vs. May

It is generally believed that ma- is a PA stative prefix; the particle may appears to consist of ma- + i (the PA locative marker). In the literature on existentials (e.g., Clark 1970, Kuno 1971), it has been shown that there is an entailment relationship between locatives and existentials.

In a nutshell, while both ma- and may mark existence, ma- codes A STATE OF BEING that results from and is defined by the EXISTENCE of the EXISTENT (the referent of the root word to which it is attached) IN A LOCUS (animate or inanimate). May directly marks a STATE OF EXISTENCE, defined by the EXISTENT (the referent of the word or phrase that it is in construction with) IN A LOCUS (animate or inanimate). When BOTH TYPES OF STATIVE PREDICATES are pared down to their least common denominator, we have:

**Exists X= ‘existent’ in Y= ‘locus’**.

Certain semantic/pragmatic distinctions between ma- versus may stative predicates do arise, as illustrated in the following examples:

(8) Mabulaklak ang puno.  
EXIST:flower NOM tree  
‘The tree (is) flowery/full of flowers.’

(9) May bulaklak ang puno.  
exist-there flower(s) NOM tree  
‘The tree has (a) flower(s).’

(10) May bulaklak sa puno.  
exist-there flower(s) DAT/LOC tree  
‘There is/are flower(s) on the tree.’

(11) Mayaman ang babae.  
wealthy NOM woman  
‘The woman (is) wealthy.’

(12) May yaman ang babae.  
exists-there wealth NOM woman  
‘The woman has wealth.’

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14 Wouk (pers. comm.) remarked that “PAN ma-” seems to sometimes or often disappear with [the development] of the focus system. This has not happened in Tagalog where the full-fledged focus system has continued to coexist with the stative predicate system.

15 It appears that THE SEMANTICS OF HAVING (possession), “state of existence” in a specified location that may codes might imply moveability or change of location from which attribution of an alienable property might be inferred; whereas the SEMANTICS OF BEING (qualification), “state of being” that ma- codes which implies non-moveability would seem to code attribution of an inalienable property. Consider and compare sentences (8) and (9) with (11) and (12). Although these sentences seem to amply illustrate the observation just made, further research on this topic is needed.

16 Tagalog does not usually mark number. Whether a word is singular or plural is deducible from the context. However, when for pragmatic reasons, plurality must be specified, the plural-marking particle manga (written as mga) is used before the word to mark plurality.
(13) May (ka-)yaman(-an) sa babae.

exists-there wealth DAT/LOC woman

‘There is wealth in the woman.’

In (8) and (11), what the stative predicate with ma- says about the target of predication is that the tree/woman is in a state of being, defined or modified by the existence of flowers/wealth WITHIN them. On the other hand, in (9)/(12) and (10)/(13) what the stative predicate with may says about the target of predication is that ‘there exist flowers/wealth in the tree/woman’, as possessor in (9)/(12) but as location in (10)/(13).17

3.1 *Ma-* stative predicates

Words prefixed with ma- are associated with MODIFIERS (adjectives and adverbs) and what is generally referred to as “STATIVE VERBS”.18 In combination with the affix ka to form maka-, ma- stative predicates are similarly viewed as verbal predicates and referred to as “abilitative verbs”.

As pointed out earlier, ma- codes A STATE OF BEING, defined by the referent of the root word (the EXISTENT) that it is prefixed to and arrived at by the EXISTENCE OF THE EXISTENT in the LOCUS (the TARGET OF PREDICATION). The target of predication UNDERGOES THE STATE OF BEING referred to by the ma-stative predicate; it is therefore in the semantic case role of UNDERGOER.

The referent of the root word (the existent) may be: a MATERIAL OBJECT or a REIFIED CONCEPT (quality or process). Thus, we have:

(14) ma- + material object:

ma- + tinik ‘thorn/fishbone’ > matinik ‘thorny/bony’
ma- + damo ‘grass’ > madamo ‘grassy’

(15) ma- + reified concept (quality)

ma- + ganda ‘beauty’ > maganda ‘beautiful’
ma- + bagal ‘slowness’ > mabagal ‘slow/slowly’

(16) ma + reified concept (process)

a. ma- + tulog ‘sleep’ > matulog ‘be asleep’
ma- + kita ‘see’ > makita ‘be visible’
ma- + tapos ‘finish’ > matapos ‘be finishable’ (or ‘be able to finish’)
ma- + kain ‘eat’ > makain ‘be edible/eatable (or ‘be able to eat’)

17 Since may predicates code possession or location that carries the implication of potential moveability, this distinction suggests that may marks attribution of an alienable property while ma- marks attribution of an inalienable property. At this point, however, this suggestion requires further exploration.

18 Grant (1999) asserts that “adjectives can be construed as a kind of stative verb”. Read in context, it is clear that his use of “verb” is interpretable as “predicate”.
The following examples will illustrate these different types of ma- stative predicates.

(17) **Ma-** + material object

a. Matinik ang isda.  
   bony NOM fish  
   ‘exists bones in fish’  
   (‘The fish is bony.’)

b. Madamo ang parke.  
   grassy NOM park  
   ‘exists grass in park’  
   (‘The park is grassy.’)

In sentence (18a), *maganda* functions as a stative predicate and the construction is generally known in the literature as of the predicate adjective sentence type. In sentence (18b), however, *mabagal* ‘slow/slowly’ is not functioning as a stative predicate but as modifier of *lumakad* ‘walk/walked’.

(18) **Ma-** + reified concept (quality)

a. Maganda ang bahay.  
   STATE-beauty NOM house  
   ‘state-beauty/beauty-exists-in house’  
   (‘The house is beautiful.’)

b. Mabagal lumakad ang babae.  
   STATE-slow walk NOM woman  
   ‘state-slow/slowness-exists-in walk woman’  
   (‘The woman walks slowly.’)

3.1.1 **Ma-** + reified concept (process)

The following ma-words are labeled STATIVE VERBS in the literature and accordingly treated and taught as SYNTACTICALLY VERBAL PREDICATES. While the English translations are verbal predications, it must be borne in mind that the Tagalog sentences are not. Note the UNDERLYING SEMANTIC and MORPHOSYNTACTIC parallelism that hold between the “predicate adjectives” given above and the “stative verbs” given below:

- *ma-* + *tulog* ‘state of being, defined by sleep’ (‘to sleep’)
- *ma-* + *gutom* ‘state of being, defined by hunger’ (‘to get hungry’)
- *ma-* + *takot* ‘state of being, defined by fear’ (‘to be afraid’)

These stative predicates are “centripetal” (“intransitive” in English) and do not involve other argument NPs in the process.
Furthermore, ‘to sleep’, ‘to get hungry’, and ‘to be afraid’ are not volitional acts and this is revealed in Tagalog literal rendition as ‘to be in the state of being asleep/hungry/afraid’. As we shall see below, this semantic property of the stative predicate gives rise to rhetorical functions that serve sociocultural modes of communication exceptionally well.

Other stative predicates defined by process words do involve other arguments; i.e., the process is “centrifugal” (“transitive” in English grammar). For example:

\[ \text{ma- + kita} \] ‘state of being, defined by visibility (‘to see’)
\[ \text{ma- + dinig} \] ‘state of being, defined by audibility (‘to hear’)

‘To see (something)’ is realized in Tagalog by the string of words that actually mean ‘(something) is “see-able”, i.e., in a visible state’. The same goes for ‘to hear (something)’ is realized in Tagalog as ‘(something) is “hear-able”/in an audible state’.

Similarly, we have:

\[ \text{ma- + gawa} \] ‘state of being doable’ (‘to be able to make/do [something]’)
\[ \text{ma- + tapos} \] ‘state of being finishable’ (‘to be able to finish [something]’)
\[ \text{ma- + basa} \] ‘state of being readable’ (‘to be able to read [something]’)
\[ \text{ma- + kain} \] ‘state of being edible’ (‘to be able to eat [something]’)

Stative predicates defined by process words, as to be expected, are subject to \textit{aspectual} distinctions.\textsuperscript{19} The examples of stative predicates given thus far have been in the \textit{IRREALIS} (not begun) INFINITIVE aspect. It is, however, the \textit{REALIS} aspect forms, the \textit{ONGOING} and the \textit{COMPLETIVE}, that occur most often in usage.

These \textit{REALIS} aspect forms are coded by the replacement of the \textit{IRREALIS} marker /m/ in \textit{ma-} with the \textit{REALIS} marker /n/, as in:

\begin{align*}
\text{matulog} & > \text{natutulog, natulog} \\
\text{magutom} & > \text{nagugutom, nagutom} \\
\text{makita} & > \text{naki kita, naki ta} \\
\text{marinig}^{20} & > \text{naririnig, marinig} \\
\text{maubos} & > \text{naubos, naubos} \\
\text{mabasa} & > \text{nababasa, nabasa}
\end{align*}

The following examples illustrate this type of stative predicate:

(19) \text{Natulog} \quad \text{ang} \quad \text{babae.} \\
\text{COMPL.STATE.sleep} \quad \text{NOM} \quad \text{woman} \\
‘s\text{state of sleep (perf) woman}’ \\
(‘The woman slept.’)

(20) \text{Nagutom} \quad \text{ang} \quad \text{babae.} \\
\text{COMPL.STATE.hunger} \quad \text{NOM} \quad \text{woman} \\
‘s\text{state (perf) of hunger woman}’ \\
(‘The woman got hungry.’)

\textsuperscript{19} The aspect system of Tagalog is based on the following distinctions: IRREALIS (not begun) vs. REALIS (begun); within IRREALIS, INFINITIVE vs. CONTEMPLATIVE (future) and within REALIS, ONGOING (present/progressive) vs. COMPLETIVE (preterit).

\textsuperscript{20} In Tagalog, intervocalic [d] is replaced by [r].
Stative predicates such as these may also be used with the locative focus suffix -(h)an depending on whether the root word is semantically compatible with the locative focus, as in (25)–(27).

(25)  **Nainuman**  n(an)g  bata ang  bote.  
**COMPL.STATE.drink.LOC  GEN/ATTR  child  NOM  bottle**  
‘drinkable-of/to child (perf) bottle’

(26)  **Nabalian**  n(an)g  bata ang  sanga.  
**COMPL.STATE.break.LOC  GEN/ATTR  child  NOM  branch**  
‘breakable-off of/to child (perf) branch’

(27)  **Nasarapan**  n(an)g  bata ang  pansit.  
**COMPL.STATE.delicious.LOC  GEN/ATTR  child  NOM  pansit**  
‘delicious-to of/to child (perf) pansit’

Presenting information that is potentially damaging or embarrassing for the undergoer NP as a process couched in stative-predicate form, i.e., as a RESULTANT STATE (rather than as a deliberate act on someone else’s part) provides the means for not casting any aspersions on anyone. The stative predicate is thus generally used to inform of an adverse state of affairs that has BEFALLEN the undergoer NP and presents the undergoer as victim of circumstances. The following examples clearly demonstrate such a rhetorical/pragmatic function of the stative predicate.

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21 The orthographic tradition has the genitive particle nang written as ng.
22 It is not to be confused with the (semantically) adversative stative predicate.
(28) Natanggal ang babae.
COMPL.STATE.remove NOM woman
’s-state-removed (perf) woman’
(‘The woman was laid off (not fired).’)

(29) Natifus ang babae.
COMPL.STATE.typhoid NOM woman
’s-state-typhoid (perf) woman’
(‘The woman got typhoid.’)

It is interesting to note that the locative focus is explicitly marked in sentences (30) and (31).

(30) Namatayan ang pamilya.
COMPL.STATE.death.LOC NOM family
’s-state-death on (perf) family’
(‘There was a death in the family.’)

(31) Nasunugan ang pamilya.
COMPL.STATE.fire.LOC NOM family
’s-state-fire on (perf) family’
(‘The family had a fire.’)

As previously mentioned, the semantics/pragmatics of the notion of STATE appears to have given rise to implications of NONVOLITIONAL/INVOLUNTARY/ACCIDENTAL happenings. At the same time, the semantic component of “DO-ABILITY” has given rise to implications of ABILITY to bring about the resultant state of the process named by the root word. As a result, many of these stative predicates could indicate either one of the following two things: (a) The actor was ABLE to accomplish the process named by the stative predicate; (b) The actor UNINTENTIONALLY accomplished the process named by the stative predicate. For example, nakita [na.kí.ta] can mean ‘HAPPENED to see’ or ‘was able to see’.23 Similarly, narinig [na.ri.níg] means ‘HAPPENED to hear’ or ‘was able to hear’; nainom [na.i:nóm] means ‘ACCIDENTALLY drank’ or ‘was able to drink’; nabali [na.bá.li?] means ‘ACCIDENTALLY broken’ or ‘was able to break’.24

The semantic component of state of “DO-ABILITY” is made explicit by the addition of the affix ka- to the stative prefix ma- to form the “abilitative” prefix maka- in what is known as “abilitative verbs” in Tagalog (e.g., makatulog, makakita, makakain, makainom, makaalis, makalakad, etc.).25 The affix ka introduces an INCHOATIVE component into the semantic complex of this variety of stative predicate. Thus the closest translation of makatulog, for example, is ‘to COME TO BE ABLE to sleep’. The fact that the imperative mode is ruled out for maka- predicates indicates that they are in fact

23 In some dialects, this meaning is marked by vowel lengthening in na- [ná:].
24 As with nakita, some dialects mark “involuntary” with vowel lengthening in na- [ná:].
25 Ramos and De Guzman (1971: 583) state that “Unlike the dynamic mag-/um- forms, the maka-/makapag- forms indicate a POTENTIALITY or STATE of readiness.” They nonetheless consider maka-/makapag- predicates as verbs.
inchoative. The command/request *Makatulong ka! is unacceptable, but Matulong ka! ‘Go to sleep’ is.26

(32) Nakatulog ang bata.
    COMPL-STAT-INCHO-ABIL-sleep NOM child.
    ‘state-came-to-be-able-sleep (perf) child’
    (‘The child fell asleep.’)

(33) Nakakita n(an)g pera ang bata.
    COMPL-STAT-ABIL-see GEN money NOM child
    ‘state-came-to-be-able-find (perf) money’
    (‘The child found money.’)

The lengthening of the vowel of na- or ka- in these stative predicates also marks the meaning of NONVOLITIONAL, INVOLUNTARY, ACCIDENTAL processes. Thus, nakatulog [na:katú.log] means ‘fell asleep without meaning to’. Similarly, nakakita [na:ka.ki.ta]/[na.ka:ki.ta] means ‘found money by chance’.

The use of the “imperfective” form (REALIS, ONGOING aspect) of the above maka-stative predicates expresses ongoing/HABITUAL ability to undergo the process named by the stative predicate, as in (34) and (35).

(34) Nakatulog sa kama ang bata.
    ONGOING-STAT-ABIL-sleep in bed NOM child
    ‘ongoing-stat-abil-sleep in bed child’
    (‘The child is usually able to sleep on the bed.’)

(35) Nakakita n(an)g pera ang bata.
    ONGOING-STAT-ABIL-see GEN-ATTR money NOM child
    ‘ongoing-stat-abil-find money child’
    (‘The child is usually able to find money by chance.’)

3.2 May stative predicates

Since may and its alternative existential marker mayroon/meron serve to express the equivalent of English ‘to have’ and the existential phrase ‘there + is’ in Tagalog, it has generally been described and classified as a verbal predicate. The may constructions given below will show why such an analysis is not appropriate for the Tagalog stative predicate structure: ‘X is in a state of existence in locus Y’.

3.2.1 May vs. mayroon / meron

It should be borne in mind that may and mayroon do not belong to the same morphological category in Tagalog. May (often pronounced [mey]) is a particle while

26 The occurrence of the affix ka in combination with ma-, mag-, pag-, i-, etc., appears to imbue the word with INCHOATIVE meaning; e.g., maka- ‘to come to be able to’, magkaro is ‘to come to have/to acquire’, pagkatao ‘personhood’/dignity/humanity. The fact that maka-predicates cannot be made imperative shows its underlying inchoative meaning; i.e., we cannot command someone to BECOME X (except perhaps on stage). However, as a prefix by itself, ka-imbues the word with the idea of “co-______”/reciprocity (e.g., kalaro ‘playmate’, kagalit ‘enemy’, kaibigan ‘friend’).
mayroon is a full word. This means that may can not stand alone and may not be used in isolation, whereas mayroon can do so and it may be used in isolation.

The full word mayroon (may + doon\(^{27}\) ‘there’) and its colloquial form meron may be used in all contexts while the use of the particle may is subject to certain restrictions.

The particle may may only be used when it is immediately followed by a full word (e.g., noun, possessive pronoun, verbal word, modifier, etc.).\(^{28}\)

(36) \textbf{May} \quad \text{pera} \quad \text{ang} \quad \text{bata}. \\
\hspace{1cm} \text{STAT-LOC} \quad \text{money} \quad \text{NOM} \quad \text{child} \\
‘exist-there money child’ \\
(‘The child has money.’)

(37) \textbf{May} \quad \text{kanyang} \quad \text{sarili} \quad \text{ang} \quad \text{bata} \\
\hspace{1cm} \text{STAT-LOC} \quad \text{his} \quad \text{own} \quad \text{NOM} \quad \text{child} \\
‘exist-there his (own) child’ \\
(‘The child has his own.’)

(38) \textbf{May} \quad \text{biniling} \quad \text{laruan} \quad \text{ang} \quad \text{bata}. \\
\hspace{1cm} \text{STAT-LOC} \quad \text{bought} \quad \text{toy} \quad \text{NOM} \quad \text{child} \\
‘exist-there bought toy child’ \\
(‘The child has a bought toy.’)

(39) \textbf{May} \quad \text{malaking} \quad \text{baril-barilan} \quad \text{ang} \quad \text{bata}. \\
\hspace{1cm} \text{STAT-LOC} \quad \text{big-LKR/ATTR} \quad \text{toy-gun} \quad \text{NOM} \quad \text{child} \\
‘exist-there big toy gun child’ \\
(‘The child has a big toy gun.’)

Whenever another particle or word comes between may and the existent word, mayroon must be used. This happens when the IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING word is a pronoun,\(^{29}\) a particle such as the interrogative marker ba, na ‘already/now’, or a modal such as yata ‘looks like/seems’.

Both mayroon and meron require the use of the “linker” (attributive marker) na. After a vowel or /n/, na changes to the clitic -ng which is attached to the preceding word:

\[\text{mayroon/meron} + \text{na} + \text{pera} > \text{mayroong/merong pera}\]

‘has/there is money’

Whenever a word or particle comes between mayroon/meron and the existent word, the clitic =ng (< na) is attached to such a word or particle, as in (40)–(43).

\(^{27}\) It is to be noted that may + doon results in a double locative.

\(^{28}\) Santos (1940:248–9) lists the pluralizer particle manga (written mga) and the locative marker sa- that is used as an adjectivizer prefix among the words that can be used with may. Although they are written as separate words, they and the word preceded by them form a single lexicosemantic entity. This would therefore invalidate their inclusion in the list; they simply belong to the category of FULL WORD (e.g., noun, modifier, etc.).

\(^{29}\) Tagalog pronouns generally show clitic tendencies. When they do not occur in isolation, they immediately follow the predicate word. For example, "Umalis nang maaga ako > Umalis ako nang maaga ‘I left early’."
Mayroon siyang baril.  
(< may baril siya.)

‘S/he has a gun.’

Mayroon bang baril ang titser?  
(< may baril ba ang titser?)

‘Does the teacher have a gun?’

Mayroon nang baril ang titser.  
(< may baril na ang titser.)

‘The teacher already has a gun.’

Mayroon yatang baril ang titser.  
(< may baril yata ang titser.)

‘I wonder if the teacher has a gun.’

Yet another instance that the full word mayroon/meron must be used is when it is used in isolation as in a one-word answer to a question, as in (44) and (45).

Q: May pera ba ang bata?  
‘Does the child have money?’

A: Oo, mayroon.  
‘Yes, s/he does.’

Q: May bulaklak ba sa hardin?  
‘Are there flowers in the garden?’

A: Oo, mayroon.  
‘Yes, there are.’

When the quantifier marami ‘many/lots of’ is used to modify the existent word, may or mayroon/meron is usually dropped.\(^{30}\) Thus, instead of *May/mayroong/merong maraming bulaklak sa hardin, the correct form is as follows.

Maraming bulaklak sa hardin.  
EXIST-many-LKR/ATTR flower(s) LOC garden

‘exist-many flowers in garden’
‘There are lots of flowers in the garden.’

However, it appears that in semantically possessive sentences may is often retained. Thus, the following sentence is quite acceptable:

\(^{30}\) As pointed out earlier, something similar happens with mabulaklak ‘full of/has lots of flowers’. Instead of saying Maraming bulaklak ang sampaguita ‘The sampaguita plant has lots of flowers’, one can say Mabulaklak ang sampaguita.
May maraming bulaklak ang babae.

‘exist-there many flowers woman’
‘The woman has lots of flowers.’

3.3 *May* existential sentences

The English existential sentence ‘There is X in Y’ is rendered in Tagalog as the existential construction: *may* + X + locative marker + Y.

Sentences (36)–(44) can be transformed to existential sentences simply by replacing the nominative marker *ang* of the target of predication/topic NP with the locative marker *sa*. Thus, sentence (36) would be:

May pera *ang* bata.
May pera *sa* bata.

‘The child has money.’ / ‘There is money with/on/in the child.’

Sentences (38)–(43) can be similarly transformed from semantically possessive to locative existential sentences. It should be borne in mind that the lexical-semantic contrast between nominative and locative case marking is irrelevant to the function of TARGET OF PREDICATION and the semantic case role of UNDERGOER.

3.3.1 *May* and *nasa*

The discussion of constructions with *may* and *nasa* have usually taken the point of view that they do NOT belong to the same paradigm. Again, this appears to stem from the English translations. Note that the morphosemantics reveals aspectual distinction within the same paradigm:

- *ma*- (irrealis/imperfective) + -i (locative)
- *na*- (realis/perfective) + *sa* (locative)

The examples usually worked over are:

(48) *May* libro *sa* mesa.

‘exist-there book on table’
(‘On the table there is a book.’)

(49) *Nasa* mesa *ang* libro.

‘exist-there table (perf) book’
(‘The book is on the table.’)

In sentence (48) the target of predication is mesa ‘table’, while in sentence (49) the target of predication is libro ‘book’. The fact that mesa is locative and libro is nominative is immaterial to the syntactic structure of the stative predication. As regards the morphosemantics, there appears to be correlation between PERFECTIVITY and DEFINITENESS (Wierbiczka 1972).
3.3.2 *May* and *wala*

How can *may* and *wala* belong to the same paradigm? Whenever this question has been raised, the answer has been “No, they can’t; they behave differently morphosyntactically” — so the conventional wisdom goes.

However, morphologically, the opposite of *wala* is not *may*; it is *mayroon*. As pointed out earlier, *may* is a particle, while *wala* and *mayroon* are full words. Morphosyntactic differences can be expected to ensue from the difference in category membership between *may* and *wala* but not between *mayroon* and *wala*. *Wala* follows the same rules outlined above for *mayroon*.

**SEMANTICALLY**, however, *wala* ‘nothing(ness)’ is in fact the opposite of *may* ‘state/existence’.

4. Coda

The differences of morphological form, “meaning”, and “part of speech” category have obscured the underlying syntactic structure that both *ma*-words and *may* phrases are stative predicates.

The stative prefix *ma-* marks a **STATE OF BEING**, defined by the **EXISTENT** (the referent of the root word that it is attached to) and *may* marks a **STATE OF EXISTENCE**, defined by the **EXISTENT** (the referent of the root word that it is in construction with — IN A LOCUS, animate or inanimate). As we may have seen from the illustrative sentences given above, however, it is clear that when both these stative predicates are pared down to their least common denominator, we have the basic syntactic structure:

**Existential marker + X = Existent + Y = Locus**

Existence as extralinguistic reality may be perceived as **QUALIFICATION** in its various forms, **POSSESSION**, or **STATEMENT OF EXISTENCE IN A GIVEN LOCATION**.

Presenting an event as a state rather than as an act absolves the participants of any blame or potentially damaging aspersions. The target of predication or the topic NP of the *ma-/may* stative predicate is in the semantic case role of UNDERGOER, not agents, even in process-word predicates. These rhetorical/pragmatic functions are at the heart of stative vs. narrative/dynamic predication. It is remarkable how well certain syntactic constructs of a language can provide the means to articulate certain matters of the basic cultural ethic of its speakers.
References


